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TAGS: [KSCA](#) [OPDC](#) [OSCI](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [TSPL](#) [KHIV](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MINISTER OF HEALTH PLEDGES  
COOPERATION ON THE PRESIDENT'S INTERNATIONAL  
MOTHER AND CHILD HIV/AIDS INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 241028

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER FOR  
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (SBU) On December 16, Ambassador Jeter, accompanied by USAID Acting Director, USAID HIV/AIDS Officer and CDC/Nigeria Statistician, presented the joint letter from Secretaries Powell and Thompson on the President's International Mother and Child HIV/AIDS Initiative (reftel) and delivered the steering committee's survey to GON Minister of Health, A.B.C. Nwosu.

2. (SBU) The Minister received the letter and talking points with enthusiasm and thanked President Bush and the people of the United States for the Initiative. Citing his personal commitment to the success of the program, Nwosu said that combating HIV/AIDS is one of his Ministry's core objectives. The Minister said he appreciated the Initiative's focus on mother and child transmission because it reinforces his position that HIV/AIDS should be viewed as more than a sexually transmitted disease and he has reorganized the Ministry to reflect this.

3. (SBU) Nwosu promised the full cooperation of the Ministry and suggested the establishment a joint committee between the Ministry of Health and the USG, whose Nigerian counterparts he immediately named. The Minister was hopeful that the Mother and Child HIV/ AIDS Initiative would support the GON's efforts to determine the actual size of their HIV positive population. Nwosu added that President Obasanjo recently asked the Ministry for an accurate count of the HIV population in the country, which they began by surveying a population of 600,000. The real gap in HIV/AIDS health services is in rural areas, the Minister said. To be worthwhile, this Initiative must have a broad reach that includes those areas.

4. (C) The Ambassador also briefed the Minister on the proposed POTUS visit to the National Hospital for a HIV/AIDS event. The Minister will play a leading role in welcoming POTUS to the National Hospital. Nwosu was optimistic that a POTUS visit to Nigeria and the HIV/AIDS initiative may encourage the Presidency to release much needed funding for HIV/AIDS. Nwosu admitted, however, that he is reluctant to accept any funding until he has a plan that will result in success.

5. (SBU) Comment: The Minister welcomed this initiative and demonstrated his willingness to go beyond rhetoric to support it. The GON acknowledges that HIV/AIDS is a serious problem in Nigeria but they still lack a consensus plan to confront it. The President's initiative is a welcome opportunity for the GON to develop a plan of action to prevent mother-to-child transmission and it will be received in Nigeria with great enthusiasm.

JETER